

is not distinctive as compared with 'Carolina Chickadee' and where the two occur we have to use the qualifying term "Black-capped" for the former. This is done now in spite of the 'Check-List' and the sooner this name is incorporated in the volume the better. So too "Crossbill" which lost its qualifying name "American" at the same time that the Robin did, is unsatisfactory and ambiguous and consequently in popular usage and in not a few publications it appears, as it should, "Red Crossbill." So too "Water-Thrush" should be officially as it is popularly called "Northern Water-Thrush" and there are doubtless others. In some cases however, there seems to have been no ambiguity as "Palm" and "Yellow-Palm" Warbler but these may also be changed if it is thought better.

Mr. Lewis's proposition concerning the consistent naming of a species and its component sub-species has already been discussed in these columns. While granting the need of some collective heading such as he suggests we do not think what the use of a word in the singular for the collective concept embracing all of the subspecies of a species will be anything but ambiguous. The word "Song-Sparrow" and "*Melospiza melodia*" have been used so long, and are still used, to denote the eastern race alone that we cannot now use the same terms to denote the whole assemblage of Song Sparrows. A better plan and one which we hope to see adopted in the next edition of the 'Check-List' has been suggested: namely to use the plural name "Song-Sparrows" for the complex *Melospiza melodia*.

After all, as stated at the outset, popular nomenclature is radically different from technical nomenclature and we must follow popular usage rather than try to arbitrarily influence it, even though we be not consistent.

WITMER STONE.]

### **Procellaria vittata Forster is not Halobaena caerulea Gmelin.**

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

In the 'Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.,' Vol. 32, p. 201, Dec. 31, 1919, Mr. H. C. Oberholser has claimed that *Procellaria vittata* was given by Forster to the bird now known as *Halobaena caerulea* Gmelin, and as it was published prior to the latter it should replace it.

Apparently Mr. Oberholser's contention is based upon the information provided by myself in the 'Birds of Australia,' and as his conclusion is incorrect, I here re-state the facts as clearly as possible so that no future misapprehension may arise.

Forster accompanied Cook on his second voyage round the world as naturalist and his son George was with him as painter. The elder Forster, whose initials are J. R., considered himself entitled to publish the results of the voyage, but the Admiralty who had engaged him did not agree with that view when his engagement concluded and definitely for-

bade him to publish anything. He overcame that obstacle in a small degree by the publication of a book entitled 'Voyage round the World' which was issued under his son's name. A preface by the son tells of the "ill treatment" of the father by the powers that were.

Casually making notes of the birds met with on the voyage, G. Forster, in Vol. I, p. 91, 1777, mentioned "Blue Petrel, so called from its having a bluish gray color, and a band of blackish feathers across the whole wing." On p. 98, when Blue Petrels were again mentioned, a footnote (perhaps by J. R.) gives a Latin equivalent, *Procellaria vittata*. I concluded "the name cannot be accepted as of this introduction, as it is indeterminable."

Had Mr. Oberholser consulted Forster's work he might have found a stronger claim to the name on p. 153 when about Dusky Sound, New Zealand, in April, 1773, Forster wrote: "Here they found an immense number of petrels of the bluish species, common over the whole southern ocean,\* some being on the wing, and others in the woods. . . . They have a broad bill, and a blackish stripe across their bluish wings and body, and are not so large as the common shear-water or mank's petrel of our seas." Mr. Oberholser concluded "there is, no doubt at all" what Forster called *vittata*, and this paragraph would suggest that he was right, but that the bird so called was *not* the one Mr. Oberholser decided. The broad bill mentioned is diagnostic of *Prion*, and is not seen in *Halobaena*. The two birds are similar with peculiar diagnostic and easily observed characters, the *Prion* having a broad bill and dark tips to its wedge-tail, the *Halobaena* having a narrow bill and white tips to its square tail. Consequently no general description could be valid unless the peculiar features were mentioned.

Why Mr. Oberholser ignored the detailed account given in Cook's account of the same voyage which I quoted in full, I cannot say, as there the matter was so clearly stated that *no* reader should misunderstand it. I may recapitulate shortly. Under date of October 16, 1772, Cook logged "were now accompanied . . . and small grey petrel less than a pigeon. It has a whitish belly, and grey back, with a black stroke across from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. These birds sometimes visited us in great flights. They are southern birds; and are, I believe, never seen within the tropics, or north of the Line." On December 23, 1772, Cook reported "Mr. Forster, who went in the boat, shot some of the small grey birds before mentioned, which were of the petrel tribe, and about the size of a small pigeon. Their back, and upper side of their wings, their feet and bills, are of a blue grey color. Their bellies, and under sides of their wings, are white, a little tinged with blue. The upper side of their quill feathers is a dark blue tinged with black. A streak is formed by feathers nearly of this color, along the upper parts of the wings, and crossing the back a little above the tail. The end of the tail

---

\* See page 91.

feathers is also of the same color. Their bills are much broader than any I have seen of the same tribe, and their tongues are remarkably broad. These blue petrels, as I shall call them, are seen nowhere but in the southern hemisphere, from about the latitude of 28° and upwards." Under date December 27, 1772 (p. 32) is written: "Some of the petrels (shot by Mr. Forster) were of the blue sort, but differing from those before mentioned, in not having a broad bill; and the ends of their tail feathers were tipped with white instead of dark blue. But whether these were only the distinction betwixt the male and female was a matter disputed by our naturalists."

J. R. Forster apparently had no doubt on the matter as in his Manuscript he named *Procellaria vittata* under date November 30–December 23, and gave the range as 'Habitat a Tropico capricorni in Circulum Antarticum usque, volant celerrime.' He fully described thereunder the *Prion*, describing his broad bill and the dark tips to the tail. On the date December 28, he added *Procellaria similis*, giving the character of the *Halobaena* and the range as 'Hab. in Oceano simillimum Proc. vittatae at examini Antartico circa gradum latitudinis 58° primam observata.' The former he called "The Banded Petrel" and the latter "The white-edged silvery Petrel."

This is not novel, as these descriptions were published in 1844 under the editorship of Lichtenstein and consequently "There is no doubt" what Forster called *Procellaria vittata*, but this assuredly was not the species now known as *Halobaena caerulea* (Gmelin) which Forster also fully described under the name *Procellaria similis*. It may interest Mr. Oberholser also to note that J. R. Forster's names were published, also as *nomina nuda*, in the 'Tagebuch Reise Südsee unter Cook,' 1781, p. 35, where *Procellaria similis* and *vittata* both occur.

Consequently if *Procellaria vittata* Forster were to be recognized as a valid name, it would apply only to the species commonly known as *Prion vittatus* (Gmelin) and no change save that of authorship would be necessary.

GREGORY M. MATHEWS.

Foulis Court, Fair Oak, Hants, England.  
February 24, 1920.